

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Unlicensed White Space Device Operations in the Television Bands*, ET Docket No. 20-36, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (February 28, 2020)

Remember 2008? The iPhone was six months old. The Android operating system was just introduced, and the digital television transition had yet to begin. But a new wireless era was emerging. Because the same-old, same-old ways of thinking about scarcity in our airwaves were giving way to new theories of abundance.

Nowhere was this clearer at this agency than in our embrace of white spaces. Because in 2008 the Federal Communications Commission proposed something radical. We suggested that instead of letting unused portions of traditional television spectrum lay fallow, we would open them up for unlicensed use. Not everyone embraced this idea from the start. Mixing broadcast and broadband was not for the faint of heart. But the engineers at this agency saw the value proposition in introducing unlicensed service to a band with significant propagation. They understood from the get-go that these unused airwaves could help bring more broadband to rural and hard to reach communities. They could help close the digital divide.

Twelve years hence, we are still working on what was visionary back in 2008. Although white space innovation began in the United States, it actually advanced more rapidly abroad. Eleven countries now have rules permitting television white space devices to use broadcast spectrum to help bring broadband in reach. Fourteen countries have active trials and pilot projects. But here at home, deployment of this technology has stalled.

We need to get our mojo back. The good news is that this rulemaking is part of that effort. In it, we propose updating our Part 15 rules to provide more flexibility for television white space devices in the United States. To this end, today's rulemaking proposes increasing the maximum power that white space devices can use and extending the height of their antennas. These technical changes can open up new possibilities for using these airwaves to power the Internet of Things and extend the reach of broadband networks.

This is progress. So thank you to those, including broadcasters, who helped develop the ideas we introduce in this rulemaking. But more work needs to be done to address remaining regulatory barriers. We have five outstanding petitions for reconsideration involving white space development and deployment. We also need to clear up unresolved matters regarding designation of a database administrator.

I look forward to doing this—and the sooner the better. Because the ideas we had in 2008 are still worth pursuing because by using white spaces we can put more of our airwaves to use for all.